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ABSTRACT

A variety of classroom activities are offered in this paper as ways of exercising children's imaginations. Following a discussion of the need for developing creative thinking in children, some ways to estatlish the freedom or atmosphere to begin fantasies are offered and a guided fantasy technique for classroom use is outlined. The second half of the paper contains several examples of fantasies that teachers and group leaders have used to facilitate the growth of the imagination. (RL)

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UNICORNS AND DRAGONS: USING GUIDED IMAGERY IN THE CLASSROOM

"Imagination - an aspect of the learning process that is uniquely human and that most often goes uninstructed in our schools."[1]

With the emphasis in recent years so strongly on the basics and reality training, the focus in the classroom is primarily on learning the rules and remembering the facts. Few opportunities are provided for creative or inventive thinking and the exercise of judgment. No correlation seems to be made between fantasy and reality. Yet children are constantly involved in other people's fantasies. The television shows they see, the books they read, the stories they hear, the art they see are all expressions of someone else's fantasies. We teach them that others are creative, inventive and knowledgeable. We need to teach them that the same is true of themselves.[2]

All our students have imaginations, but some are more free to use their imagination than others. Fantasies and feelings can "obstruct learning when they are uncontrolled. A feeling or image that cannot be shared is estranging. A feeling or image that cannot be controlled is frightening. Control of emotion and fantasy is essential for the attainment or discovery of knowledge and prerequisite for the formation or invention of knowledge. We need to provide relevant ways for the child to develop, expand and utilize his fantasies and imaginings as well as his cognitive reality."[3]

Most children, before they start school, enjoy a rich world of fantasy where they pretend they are cowboys, Indians, spacemen, doctors, nurses,

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[1] R. Jones. Fantasy and Feeling in Education. Publisher and copyright date unknown, page 59.

[2] Paraphrased from Gloria Castillo's Left Handed Teaching. Praeger Publishers, 1974, page 80.

[3] op. cit., page 80.

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pilots and whatever they choose to be. This kind of imaginative play is often discouraged after they come to school. "The richness of the child's imagination can be encouraged and expanded through exercises in awareness and the use of fantasy in the classroom. Being able to see pictures in our minds is important in learning. Are you able to read a story without picturing the people and the scenes? Can you remember a place you have been without picturing it? The teacher can help to facilitate an atmosphere where the pupil's imagination can expand and where a sense of freedom to imagine is encouraged. Once children learn to use their imagination they are ready to use it in creative writing, art and creative drama. Learning can then become a very personal adventure.

Some ways to establish the freedom or atmosphere to begin fantasies are by reading a descriptive paragraph from a familiar story and then asking the group to share what they saw in their imagination. Doing this for a fifteen minute period each day for a week will set the first step in allowing children to explore their imaginations. Following this, encourage the children to close their eyes for a minute and picture a person they know. Then again encourage them to share by describing the person they saw in their imagination. Another step could then be to close their eyes and remember a place they have visited lately. Encourage the students to remember more about the place by asking - "What are the shapes of the objects around you?" "What are the colors you see?" "Where are you in this place?" "How are you feeling about being there?" Sharing time will be longer but encourage more children to share the description of their place and their feelings while being there.

Using fantasies stimulates the child's understanding of himself and a better understanding of other people around him. The child develops a better self-concept and this reflects in other areas of his school work.

Expressing personal experiences and emotions verbally, in creative writing, in creative drama or art help the children to get to know each other better. The child learns that each person is unique.[4]

GUIDED FANTASY TECHNIQUE SHEET

Fantasy: the use of fantasy has several functions.

1. It enables participants to recreate scences and situations they once experienced.
2. It allows participants to experience situations and scenes they have never experienced.
3. It allows participants to use and stretch their imaginations.
4. It allows participants access to sources of knowledge not normally available to them.

Information concerning the use of fantasy in the classroom:

1. There are some skills that children must have in order to do a fantasy.
   a. They must be able to sit with their eyes closed.
   b. There must be enough trust in you and in other classmates so that constant giggling, peeking, etc. doesn't happen.
2. It is important to do something with the material generated by a fantasy. Talking about it, drawing some detail from it, recording feelings in a journal and/or writing stories are just a few ideas.
3. Fantasy lends itself extremely well to both subject areas and classroom management. For example, after two days of rain, the children are very restless in class. A fantasy experience where

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[4]Aileen M. Huss, Fantasy in the Classroom. Publisher and copyright date unknown, pages 26-27.

you ask them to go away somewhere where they would really like to be, and ask them to do there whatever they want, works surprisingly well in dealing with the restless energy. Children tend to come back from such an experience refreshed and more present to the classroom.

Guided fantasy lends itself readily to both the oral and written language program. It can be used as a source for combined art and creative writing experiences. It can be used to expand, enrich, reinforce concepts in all content areas, including math, science, physical education. The use of guided fantasy can help teachers reach several multicultural objectives in the classroom, including increased understanding of self and others, increased acceptance of and respect for others, and improved self-concept.

4. In doing fantasy, some people actually <u>see</u> the scenes, some people <u>think about</u> the scenes and some people <u>respond emotionally</u> to the scenes. It is important to tell students that some of them may not see, or may not think, or whatever. All the students should know that their unique way of responding to a fantasy is just fine. THERE IS NO SINGLE RIGHT WAY. ALL THEIR WAYS ARE RIGHT.

Some general information on the use of fantasy:

1. Word choice is very important since frequently people form their fantasy as you are speaking. Until you are experienced at doing fantasy (and perhaps even then) it is a good idea to write out what you want to say.
2. The directions you give to participants should be specific enough for them to form the type of images you are wanting and general

enough for them to include their own information. (eg - "Imagine yourself walking in the country on a perfect day. What do you see around you? What do you hear...smell....? What is the weather like? etc.... As opposed to "Imagine yourself walking in the country on a perfect day...see the shape of the trees... feel the sunshine on your face...")

3. Speak clearly and slowly as you lead the fantasy. Your tone of voice should be close to normal, slightly softer. Try to avoid hypnotic or sing song tones of voice.
4. Experiment with timing...the idea is to give enough time for participants to create and experience your directions. Allow enough time for that to happen but not so much that people get bored. Ask for feedback from participants if you are unsure of how they experienced the timing.
5. The more specifically you can ask about items pertaining to the five senses, the more vivid the fantasy will be. (eg - "Imagine yourself sitting on a cliff...look closely at the ground...What colors do you see?...Put your hand on the ground...What is the texture of what you touch?...What is its temperature?...")
6. Don't overuse fantasies in the classroom. This is a judgment call for you to make.
7. Always end the fantasy by bringing the students back to the place they are in and back to reality.

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Following are just a few fantasies teachers and group leaders have used to facilitate the growth of the imagination. There are many resources upon which you can draw for more of these. As you grow experienced you will be able to create your own, especially tailored to the needs of your instructional program.

FANTASY EXAMPLES

Your Kitchen

Picture in your mind your kitchen...imagine that you are there... look around the kitchen...What are all the objects and furniture you see? ...remember the colors...Where are you in the kitchen?...move so that you are in front of the sink...turn on the tap...Can you see the water running into the sink?...reach out and touch it...get a glass from a cupboard... fill the glass with water...imagine yourself drinking the water...How do you feel?...put the glass down...now move around in your kitchen...move where you want to go...take a last look around...when you are ready come back here...look around you here...you are back from a fantasy trip.

Encourage the children to share in a group or in dyads anything they saw or remembered about their kitchen. Share any feelings they had while they were there. What did they do in their kitchen?

Follow-up could be to draw a picture of their kitchen or write a paragraph about their fantasy.

Window

Imagine that you are in your home...move so that you are looking out one of the windows in your home...remember the shape and size of the window... if there are curtains, remember the color and design...remember anything else you can about the window...look out through the window...What can you see?...Are there any growing things outside?...Are there any buildings you can see?...What season of the year is it?...What colors and different shapes do you see?...remember all you can about the window and what you see while looking out of it...What are you feeling while being there?...return here... look around the place where you are now...you are back from a fantasy trip.

Share what you saw in your imagination. This could be in the whole group or in dyads. Children can draw a picture of their window or write a paragraph about their window.

Bonfire

Close your eyes and remember what it is like on a dark summer night in the country...look up at the sky...Can you see the moon?...Are there any stars?...imagine a friend with you...both of you move around and gather some small pieces of wood...perhaps you can find some birch bark...put the pieces of wood and birch bark on the ground...gather some more dry branches and twigs...place these on the pile...take a match out of your pocket... light the match and hold it to the pile of twigs...watch the tiny flame get larger and larger...see the flames lick and curl around the logs... watch as the branches begin to burn faster...Can you feel the heat of the fire?...sit down beside the fire and watch the flame...Can you see the different colors in the flames?...look around again at the sky and other things around you...How do you feel about being there?...have a good look around you and hold that picture in your mind...soon I'm going to ask you to return to this place...when you are ready open your eyes and look around you here.

Discuss what the students saw and felt. This is a very good fantasy to use for an art lesson, especially using paints or oil pastels.

Being An Animal #1

Today we are going to imagine that we are an animal...think about which animal you would like to be...you could be any animal in the world... imagine that you are that animal now...What do you look like?...What is your shape and size?...What color are you?...How do you move?...Where are you?... What does it look like where you live?...look around you and see if there are others like you or different animals...imagine that you are moving in your place...How does it feel to move?...What kind of food do you like to eat?...imagine you are looking for some food...look until you find something to eat...when you find something and if you feel like it, eat it...How do

you eat your food?...when you are finished find a good place to have a sleep...What kind of place is it?...make yourself comfortable in that place and go to sleep. Pause for a few seconds...Soon I am going to ask you to return to this place in this room. Before you leave look around in your animal world...get a good picture of what it is like around you... when you are ready open your eyes...look around the room...you are now back from a fantasy trip.

Have students share in a group or dyads their experience of being an animal. Drawing a picture of their experience of being an animal or writing a story about it would be a good follow-up.

Animals #2

Think about all the people you know, pick one you don't like and turn that person into an animal...when you've got your animal, let this animal wander about in your mind for a while...then fade it out...now turn yourself into an animal...let your animal self be in a forest...experience it... approach and enter a beautiful clearing...pay attention to what you observe in the clearing...What do you see...hear...smell...taste...feel?...let the other animal enter the clearing...How do you feel about the other animal?... What do you want to do about the other animal?...you may encounter each other in any way you wish...let whatever wants to happen come about...bring your encounter to a close...come back to this room.

Choose a partner and share your fantasy and why you chose the person and animals you did and what self-awareness you gained from the experience. Give each other feedback if it's mutually acceptable.

Animals #3

Each person will need three small sheets of paper. Close your eyes... think of a person who currently has you very upset...visualize an animal that resembles this person...draw this animal on one of the three sheets of

paper...now think of a person that you love or really like...visualize an animal that resembles this person...draw this animal...now become aware of yourself...What animal symbolizes you?...draw this animal...now think of an adjective that best characterizes each of these three persons and write it under the appropriate drawing...now share your drawings with the group.

Now close your eyes again...and go; in fantasy, to a small clearing in a forest...there in that clearing the animal that was you, meets the animal that was the disliked person...imagine what happens...now imagine the animal that is the loved person joins you in the clearing...What happens?...share your fantasy with the group if you wish.

A Secret Hiding Place

Close your eyes and find a place in your body where you can hide... imagine that you are very small...How can you get inside your body?...look all around you once you are inside...What colors do you see?...Do you hear any sounds?...find several different hiding places in your body...Where else can you hide?...Where else?...How do you get from one place in your body to another?...find the one place you like to hide in the most...open your eyes and tell where you are...How does the room look to you from your hiding place?...close your eyes and look around your hiding place again...How do you feel in your hiding place?...slowly, slowly, come out of your hiding place and join us back in this room.

Let those who want to do so, share their stories. Encourage them to talk about how they moved about in their bodies and what the room looked like from their secret hiding place.

After the class completes this lesson and each student has a "secret" hiding place to go to, you can use this as a quieting activity. When the class gets "up in the air" about something, just ask each student to go to

his or her secret hiding place, stay there for a while, and then come out and attend to the here and now.

Primary students would enjoy hearing the poem "Hiding" by Dorothy Aldis before finding their own secret hiding place.

The Box #1

A package has come for you...it is in a room...go into the room, unwrap the box and open it...see what is inside...describe it and how you feel about it and what you will do with it.

The Box #2

Close your eyes...I will lead you on an imaginary journey...you are walking along a really beautiful road...take a moment to enjoy the scenery and to sense your own relaxed feelings as you are taking this walk...while walking along this road you notice a box in the center of your road...you approach the box and you notice that it is very beautiful...you decide to open it, and inside you find three things you have always wanted...look carefully at those three things...What are they?...when you have a clear picture of them, write them down...then share your fantasy with a partner. Use this model:

What is in your box?

There are _____ in my box.

What do you want?

I want _____.

Who will help you obtain what you want?

_____ will help me.

The Wall #1

You are walking along the side of a wall...there is a way to the other side of the wall...on the other side is something you need or want...find it and bring it back.

Close your eyes. have your fantasy...don't force things to happen, just let them happen...don't change them...when the fantasy is over, open your eyes and write it down.

The Wall #2

Take several deep breaths, relax, get comfortable, close your eyes... imagine yourself on a country road, pebbles beneath your feet, grass on each side, tall trees...look down the road...walk down it...ahead of you is a wall...it is so tall you almost can't see the top...it stretches away to the sides as far as the eye can see...walk up to the wall...look at it... put your hands flat against it...feel it...experience its size, enormity... then let your fantasy continue with whatever wants to happen...when you are ready, come back here and open your eyes.

Follow-up with either general group discussion or sharing in groups of three. For older students, ask questions such as: "What might be some 'walls' people might have in their lives? Are there any 'walls' in your life? What are they? Could you think of one or two big ones in your life right now? When you have a wall in your life, how do you usually deal with it?"

The Wall #3

"Everyone stand up on your seat...in front of you is a wall...do everything you would have to do to get ready to paint that wall...when ready, begin to paint...as you paint I am going to change things magically for you... you are painting with a brush...it is slowly getting bigger and bigger... it is one foot wide, two feet wide...three feet wide...it is so heavy you can hardly hold it up...now it is shrinking, smaller, smaller, smaller...it is now an inch wide, half an inch wide...tiny, tiny...now it has only one tiny bristle...now it has suddenly changed into a tiny roller...it is beginning to get bigger...it is normal size...now the wall is beginning to change... it has just become a brick wall...now it is a wooden fence...now it is a stone wall...plaster board...concrete."

Allow kids to finish, sit down. Total group discussion. "What color were you painting? Where was your wall, or did you think about that? What did you have to do to get ready to paint your wall? Did you think about the clothes you were wearing? Did you change them?"

This kind of acted-out fantasy encourages imagination development, creativity, flexibility and the ability to elaborate on an idea.

Foggy Forest

Fifth grade and up - language arts and creative writing.

Take several deep breaths...relax, close your eyes and imagine yourself alone in a foggy forest...there you will meet a very special person who can do things no one else in the world has ever done...you may talk to this extraordinary person and watch closely what he or she does. (Allow 3-5 minutes)

Afterward, pupils write down what they experienced.

The Island

You are on an island...get to the mainland.

Marooned on an Island

Assume that you have to spend the rest of your life on a remote island with just six people and no one else...imagine that!...none of these six people can be anyone you already know, but you're allowed to specify what they should be like...What kinds of people would you pick to live the rest of your life with?...you might think about how old they'd be, their sex, the things they'd like to do and the things you wouldn't like to do, their personalities, their looks, or any other qualities...assume, also, that all your basic needs are taken care of, so you don't have to scrounge around for food, clothing, and shelter...all you have to do is describe, as fully as you can, what the people you'd choose to live with would be like.

Sea Monster

Close your eyes...go to a beach...equip yourself with everything you need to go to the bottom of the sea, including a magic wand...go to the bottom of the sea...look around, you will find a monster...touch the monster with your wand and it will be immobilized...explore the place where the monster lives...bring the monster back to the shore...with your magic wand change the monster into whatever you want it to be.

Choose a partner and share your monsters. See if you can relate your monster to anything in your own life, and then consider the change you brought about and see if you'd be able to change your own personal monster or would like to.

Statue

You are a statue...Where are you?...What do you look like?...What happens?...(After recording this fantasy, assume the posture of the statue in your fantasy and experience being the statue. Then record how you felt.)

The Cave

You are walking in a woods where you have never been before...you come upon a cave...go in and explore. (Alternative: you hear a noise inside the cave...you go in and explore.)

Different Ages

This is a series of nine fantasies.

You are born.

You are nine.

You are fifteen.

You are twenty-two.

You are your present age.

You are one year older.

You are ten years older.

You are twenty years older.

It is the last day of your life.

I Am A Person Who

Close your eyes and relax...imagine now that you are all powerful and you are creating yourself to be any way you would most like to be... you give yourself physical qualities, intellectual qualities, emotional qualities and spiritual qualities...you can also give yourself talents and capacities...take notice now of how you are creating yourself...What do you look like?...What powers do you have?...describe yourself using this model:

I am a person who: is _____

likes _____

has _____

wants _____

prefers _____

knows _____

believes _____

hopes for _____

dreams _____

needs _____

chooses _____

is able to _____

does _____

succeeds at _____

loves _____

Follow-up activities:

1. Each student makes a self portrait using pictures, colors, paints, or whatever media is available. These portraits will

be posted around the room. They may be imagined as "birth announcements" telling of your arrival and informing the world what you will be like.

2. Give each student some clay. Each person molds the clay as if he or she were fashioning him or herself. The student talks aloud while working with the clay: "I am athletic. I like action. I have friends."

Group Fantasy - Multiculture

Lying on floor, not touching, eyes shut...imagine you are in India or North Africa in a big city's bazaar...imagine the street, the shops, the people, the animals, the smells, the sounds...imagine you are one of the people on this crowded street, but you are not yourself--you are someone else and you can choose to be anyone you want to be...think about it for a few minutes and decide who you want to be on that street...What do you look like?...What are you wearing?...What are you doing in the bazaar?...What are you feeling right now?...Where are you going?...When you leave the bazaar where will you go?...Who will be there?...What happens now?...when you are ready, come back to here and open your eyes. Share who you were with group, if you wish.

Race

Imagine that your skin color is reversed: If you are black or dark-skinned, you are now white. If you are white-skinned, you are now black or dark-skinned...become really aware of your new body...How is your body different now?...And how do you feel in this body?...How will you life be different, now that your skin color has changed?...And how do you feel about these changes?...continue to explore your new existence for a while...now change back to your own skin color and your own body...silently compare the experience of being yourself with the experience of having a different

skin color...What differences do you notice between the two, and how did you feel in each?...

The Wise Person of the Woods

Imagine you are walking in a safe woods...you are by yourself but you are not afraid...follow the path deeper into the woods and look around you as you walk...What do you see around you?...What time of day is it?... Is it warm or cool?...What sounds do you hear?...What can you smell?...as you walk along, remember that someone told you about a special place in this woods---a clearing where lives a wise person of the woods...notice that your path seems to be leading you toward a clearing up ahead...walk to the edge of the clearing, stop and look around...What do you see?... as you watch, let the wise person of the woods appear somewhere in or near the clearing...What does this person look like?...What is the person wearing? ...What is the person doing?...now remember that anyone who finds this clearing has the privilege of asking the wise person one question...take a minute now and think of an important question you want to ask the wise person ...when you have your question, go to the wise person, ask your question, and wait until the wise person answers...the wise person will answer you if you are patient...when you have your answer, slowly leave the woods and come back here...take all the time you need...when you get back, you may start to draw your wise person or your woods while you wait for everyone else to get back. Now look around your clearing again, think of your question, approach the wise person and ask it.

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